DARK HORSE COMICS

FROM THE WORLD OF GHOST

#2

Sister Imperator

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Sister Imperator

#2 of 4

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A young Sister Imperator's journey takes her to a traveling circus in eastern Europe, where she meets a wide variety of unusual people—some of whom will go on to change her life forever. As she becomes the resident human cannonball, it seems the Sister may have found her place after all...until tragedy strikes the circus. Could her stepfather's horrible reach truly extend across the Atlantic? And if not, who else could be after her? Ghost mastermind Tobias Forge partners with writer Corinna Bechko, artist Puste, colorist Thiago Rocha, and ComiCraft's Jimmy Betancourt to shed some light on a shadowy past from deep within the Ghost mythos.

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SNNNNRRRLLL

SNNNRRRLLL

SNNNRLL

STOP THAT!

ALL RIGHT, YOU RIDICULOUS MONSTER.

BUT YOU HAVE TO LET ME WORK AFTER THIS.

I SEE MEN ARE FALLING AT YOUR FEET NOW.

SOMEWHERE IN EASTERN EUROPE, 1960

ANIMALS

NOT THAT I CAN BLAME THEM.

WHEN DID YOU GET BACK FROM PARIS?

YOU NOTICED I WAS GONE? THAT'S PROGRESS.
I NOTED HOW MANY OF THE GIRLS HERE MISSED YOU. I IMAGINE AN EQUAL NUMBER NOW PINE IN FRENCH.
YOU CONFUSE ME FOR MY BROTHER.
A CIRCUS CAN ACCOMMODATE MORE THAN ONE WOLF.
SISTER DEAR, YOU WOUND ME. UNLIKE FARKUS, I'VE PRODUCED NO PUPS.
DON'T YOU *DARE* SISTER ME. I'VE ONLY BEEN HERE TWO YEARS. AND YOU'VE TRAVELED FOR AT LEAST HALF OF THAT.
LOOK AT YOU, ACTING LIKE ROYALTY WHILE HOLDING A RAKE.
I'M AMERICAN. WE DON'T DO ROYALTY.
AND YET YOU--
SO, IT'S TRUE...
...MY BROTHER IS BACK!
BUT I HEAR IT FROM MONSIEUR BANGUE BECAUSE HE COMES *HERE* EVEN BEFORE THE FAMILY CARAVAN?
I MISSED YOU TOO, MARIKA.
BUT IN TRUTH I DID NOT EXPECT TO FIND *HER* STILL A ROUSTABOUT.
SURELY HER TALENTS ARE WASTED ON THESE ANIMALS?
OH, I'M NOT COMPLAINING--
NOT EVERYONE IS BORN TO DO ACROBATICS ON HORSEBACK. THERE IS NO SHAME IN THAT.

IF I MAY HAVE A WORD? THERE HAS BEEN A GENTLEMAN HERE--

SHHH, YOUR BROTHER MIGHT HEAR YOU CALL HIM THAT.

I AM BEING SERIOUS. I WOULDN'T JOKE ABOUT THIS. NOT WITH YOU.

WAIT... WHAT HAVE YOU SEEN? *WHO* HAVE YOU--

YOU KNOW THERE IS ALWAYS...DRAMA BETWEEN TROUPES. BUT GIVEN WHAT YOU HAVE TO FEAR, I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT BE SOMETHING MORE.

STILL, I AM NOT SURE, SO I DO NOT WANT TO TELL MY BROTHERS YET.

YOU SEE HOW PROTECTIVE THEY ARE OF YOU. SO, IF I AM WRONG...

WHEN ARE *YOU* EVER WRONG ABOUT ANYTHING?

FLATTERING, YET FAIR.

THIS MAN I SAW, HE HAS BEEN HERE THREE SHOWS IN A ROW.

AND I HAVE SEEN HIM WATCHING YOU.

DOES HE LOOK AMERICAN?

I AM NOT SURE. HE IS NOT LOUD, BUT HE IS TALL.

EITHER WAY, BE WATCHFUL.

EVEN IF NOT SENT BY YOUR FATHER, HE COULD HAVE ILL INTENT.

*STEP*FATHER.

THANK YOU, MARIKA.

YOU KNOW YOU CAN COUNT UPON ME. ALWAYS.

"CAN WE *PLEASE* GET BACK TO WHY YOU TORTURED THE OLD MAN?"

LET'S SEE, *FIRST* HE MURDERED MY FATHER...

...*THEN* ASSAULTED ME *AND* KILLED MY TWIN SISTERS, FORCING ME TO RUN FOR MY LIFE. WHAT DO *YOU* CONSIDER SUFFICIENT REASON?

SO, YOU'RE SAYING HE WAS YOUR STEPFATHER!

LOOK, IT'S TRYING TO THINK. HOW ADORABLE.

JUST TELL ME--

I HAVE A BETTER IDEA. HOW ABOUT I TELL THIS MY WAY.

OTHERWISE, YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND THE ACTUAL EVIL HERE.

NOW YOU'RE GOING FULLY METAPHYSICAL?

GOOD AND EVIL ARE CONTEXTUAL, YOU KNOW.

THAT DEPENDS ON WHOM YOU ASK.

HA! POINT GOES TO YOU.

TELL IT HOWEVER YOU WERE GOING TO TELL IT.

THAT WAS NEVER IN QUESTION.

ANYWAY...

IN THOSE DAYS IT WAS ALWAYS ABOUT THE **SPECTACLE**...

CIRCUS

...BUT THOSE AREN'T THE MOMENTS I REMEMBER THE BEST.

ALL DONE? I'VE GOT TO GET BACK UP THERE!

...SO THAT WAS THE LAST I SAW OF HIM!

HA! WHAT A COWARD!

GOOD CROWD TONIGHT.

EVEN A COUPLE OF REPEAT MARKS.

FAMILY IS IMPORTANT...

...BUT FAMILY IS A **CHOICE**.

I RECALL THE QUIET TIMES BEST BECAUSE I CHOSE MINE WELL.

WOULD IT KILL YOU TO MAKE A LITTLE LESS OF A MESS?

YOU LOOK LIKE SOMEONE WHO WOULD LIKE SOMETHING MORE OUT OF LIFE.

MONSIEUR BANGUE IS ILL.

SALTPETER PROBLEMS?

YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT HOW THE CANNON WORKS. ALSO, NOT THE POINT.

BANGUE CAN'T FLY. HIS ASSISTANT ANSEL IS FILLING IN.

SO?

SO, NOW *ANSEL* NEEDS AN ASSISTANT.

AND, UNLIKE YOUR CURRENT COWORKERS...

...HE'S HOUSEBROKEN.

GOD DAMN IT!

CIRCUS

YOU OKAY?

NEIN...

ER, JA. JA.

HONESTLY, IT'S NOT THAT HARD TO GET A PERSON AIRBORNE.

IT'S JUST BASIC PHYSICS.

AND NERVES OF STEEL, OF COURSE.

YOU CAN'T MOVE AT *ALL*, OKAY? YOU HAVE TO STAY RIGID.

CANNONBALL! CANNONBALL!

READY?

ICH HABE ANGST!

CLNG

I'M GUESSING THAT MEANS YES?

NEIN! WARTEN!

CLICKK

AAAAHHHHH

KRAK

YOU IDIOT! I SAID RIGID!

NNNUU

DON'T WORRY, FOLKS! ALL PART OF THE SHOW!

NOW, KINDLY PASTE YOUR PEEPERS TO THE TRAPEZE INSTEAD...

CIRCUS

I TOLD HIM, *DON'T PANIC.* I TOLD HIM, *STRAIGHT LEGS.* I TOLD HIM!

GUESS NOT EVERYONE IS CUT OUT TO BE A CANNONBALL.

SO, HOW ABOUT IT? READY TO BE A SHOOTING STAR?

ME? I... DIDN'T YOU JUST SEE WHAT HAPPENED--

WAIT...

I'LL...

...I'LL DO IT.

READY?

OH GOD, OH GOD...

WHAT IF I CAN'T DO THIS?

CLNK

WHAT IF... I *CAN?*

FWMP

CLP CLP CLP CLP CLP

YOU WERE MAGNIFICENT!

YOU REALLY THINK SO?

HOW DO YOU FEEL? IN ONE PIECE STILL?

EXCEPT FOR THE PIECE OF MY HEART I LEFT IN THE RING OUT THERE.

WHEN CAN I DO IT AGAIN? I *CAN* DO IT AGAIN, RIGHT?

ONE OF US! ONE OF US!

ARE YOU DECENT?

KNCK KNCK

AS IF YOU KNOW ANY DECENT PEOPLE.

THREE MONTHS LATER

YOU'RE ON IN 10.

THANKS, I'M READY!

WHAT'S IT LIKE? WHEN YOU'RE UP THERE?

YOU *KNOW.* YOU'RE UP THERE TOO, ON THE WIRE.

NOT THE SAME. I CAN'T MISS A STEP OR I'LL DROP A SIBLING.

IT'S LIKE... HMM...

IT'S LIKE HAVING A SUPERPOWER.

I MEAN, COMPRESSED AIR IS THE MECHANISM, BUT IN THAT BARREL...

...I... I *CHANNEL* ALL THE DARK THINGS.

ALL MY RAGE, ALL MY FEAR... I'M DETERMINED TO MOVE THROUGH THEM, SO THEY TURN INTO *FLYING.*

AND THEN I FEEL LIKE I CAN DO ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING.

MY VERY OWN SUPERHEROINE, SISTER IMPERATOR, RULER OF FEAR ITSELF!

HMMM...

I KNOW, I KNOW. BEING CONSIDERED PART OF A FAMILY MAKES YOU--

I'VE LEARNED NOT ALL FAMILIES ARE CREATED EQUAL. I'M *KEEPING* THIS NAME.

THE WORLD'S ONLY
CANNONBALL
GIRL
CIRQUE DU CAELESTIS
TICKETS
WILD ANIMALS
SHHH SHHHH
WAKE UP!
GET THEM OUT OF HERE!
Mary Jane
Mary Jane
Mary Jane

UM...
HAS ANYONE SEEN TATA?
WHERE IS OUR FATHER?
THIS IS ALL MY FAULT. I SHOULDN'T BE HERE.
WHAT NONSENSE IS THIS?
THE MAN WHO DID THIS MUST HAVE BEEN SENT BY MY STEPFATHER.
YOU DON'T KNOW THAT. THERE ARE PLENTY WHO HATE US.
ALWAYS HAVE BEEN.
WE SHOW THEM SOMETHING WONDERFUL AND SOME CAN'T STAND IT.
THEY WANT US TO CONFORM, LEAD BORING LITTLE LIVES.
IT'S BEEN THE SAME FOR CENTURIES. THEY'VE ALWAYS LOVED BURNING US--
DEAR FRIENDS, WE ARE GATHERED TODAY TO CELEBRATE A LIFE WELL LIVED...
I HOPE YOU ARE FEELING LESS GUILT NOW, AT ANY RATE.
HOW IS IT THAT YOUR FATHER DIED AND YOU'RE COMFORTING *ME?*
THERE IS COMFORT IN COMFORTING OTHERS. BUT YOU KNOW THIS.
NOW WHAT? WE ARE TWO CIRCUS PERFORMERS WITHOUT A CIRCUS.
I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
AS IF I'M FOOL ENOUGH TO QUESTION THAT.
BUT I *WAS* WONDERING IF YOU'D GO ON THE ROAD WITH ME.

LOSING MY SECOND HOME BEFORE I EVEN TURNED TWENTY?

THAT WAS HARD.

ALMOST AS BAD? THE GUILT OF MOURNING MY OWN LOSS WHEN IT WAS **THEIR** FATHER WHO DIED.

STILL, THERE'S LITTLE A FAST CAR CAN'T CURE.

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER CATTLE CALL.

WE WERE THE *TOP DRAWS* AT CIRQUE DU CELESTE!

THIS IS HUMILIATING.

WHAT IF WE WENT HOME?

YOU MIGHT REMEMBER THAT *BURNED TO THE GROUND?*

NOT *YOUR* HOME, YOU RIDICULOUS MONSTER.

AMERICA!

WASHINGTON, D.C.
FEBRUARY 10, 1964

OHHH YES!

YOU GOT THEM! HOW...?

I HAVE MY WAYS.

WE'RE REALLY GOING! *WE'RE GOING TO SEE THE BEST BAND IN THE WORLD!*

I'M GOING TO SEE THE NEWS AND SOME COFFEE FIRST.

THANKS FOR THIS, BABE. IT MEANS A LOT.

HEY, WHAT WOULDN'T I DO FOR YOU?

OH, WHAT THE *HELL?*

HUH?

HURRY UP! YOU ALREADY TOOK TOO LONG GETTING READY!

UM, THAT WASN'T THE ONLY THING THAT KEPT US IN THE HOTEL...

HUH, TRUE. BUT NOW--

LOOK, ANOTHER ONE!

Manifest CHURCH

WHAT NOW?

MY GODDAMNED STEPFATHER IS HOLDING A RALLY.

Davies & Son

SO? WE'RE SEEING SOMETHING MORE POPULAR THAN JESUS.

YOU DON'T GET IT!

MAYBE WE CAN DISCUSS THIS AFTER--

THIS IS WHAT I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR! IF I COULD--

OH, COME ON! SERIOUSLY?

I CAN'T IGNORE THIS NOW THAT I'M HOME. HE CAN'T BE ALLOWED TO--

I KNOW THE TWO OF YOU DON'T SEE EYE TO EYE, BUT CAN'T YOU HAVE IT OUT LATER?

WHEN WE AREN'T ON OUR WAY TO A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EVENT?

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. YOU *CAN'T* UNDERSTAND.

OF COURSE NOT! BECAUSE I *KNOW* YOU NEVER GAVE ME THE WHOLE STORY.

I'M NOT STUPID. IT'S OBVIOUS THERE'S SOMETHING AWFUL IN YOUR *PAST.* BUT IT IS PAST. BUT I'M NOT. WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE US, *NOW?*

ANSWER ME! DO YOU WANT *US*?
DO I...?
DO I HAVE TO...?
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?!
I'M SORRY, I REALLY AM.
BUT THERE ARE THINGS I NEED TO DO THAT YOU CAN'T BE A PART OF.
THINGS LIKE *LEAVING MY HOME* AND *CROSSING AN OCEAN* FOR YOU?
THIS ISN'T ABOUT YOU.
YOU KNOW WHEN YOU COULD HAVE SAID THAT? BACK IN EUROPE!
MONTHS AGO!
WAIT! I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE IT LIKE THIS!
THEN YOU'LL FORGET ALL THIS? WE'LL EXPERIENCE SOME *AMAZING* MUSIC AND LET TOMORROW TAKE CARE OF ITSELF?
NO.

I COULDN'T EXPLAIN IT IN A WAY HE WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD. HOW DO YOU TELL SOMEONE IT'S YOUR FAULT YOUR SISTERS ARE DEAD?

THAT THEY CAN'T REST BECAUSE YOU'VE FOUND A NEW LIFE INSTEAD OF ENSURING THEY HAVE JUSTICE?

ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S ALSO YOUR FAULT THAT PERSON'S FATHER IS DEAD, HIS HOME DESTROYED?

...HE NEEDED JUSTICE, TOO. HE JUST DIDN'T KNOW IT.

I HAD WAITED TOO LONG, AND PEOPLE HAD BEEN HURT. IT WAS TIME FOR ACTION. NOW NO ONE COULD STOP ME...

Manifest

...NO ONE BUT **HER.**

Lost

MOM?! SHIT!

HURRY UP! WHAT DID I TELL YOU?

DON'T KEEP YOUR FATHER WAITING.

DON'T KEEP YOUR FATHER WAITING, ***MA'AM.***

DON'T KEEP YOUR FATHER WAITING, MA'AM.

I... I HAVE ANOTHER SISTER?

I'M RELATED TO SOMEONE WHO WOULD SAY MA'AM?!

I HAD MISSED MY MOTHER TERRIBLY, BUT I COULDN'T SCARE THE KID...

TOO BAD I DIDN'T KNOW THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW.

I WOULD HAVE NEVER LEFT HER WITH THAT WOMAN IF I HAD.

SHE GAVE YOU NO PROBLEMS?

I WOULDN'T SAY THAT. SHE'S FEISTY. GOT THE DEVIL IN HER.

NO WORRIES. WE'LL HAVE HER ON THE ROAD TO REDEMPTION IN NO TIME.

OWW!

DON'T BE LATE, OKAY?

CAN'T PROMISE. BUT HERE'S MONEY TO GET A NICE DINNER, EH?

I DON'T WANT--

LEARN YOUR PLACE!

NOW DO YOU SEE WHY WE TAKE SUCH A FIRM HAND WITH YOU?

YOU DON'T WANT TO END UP LIKE THAT WRETCHED CREATURE!

OR, HEAVEN FORBID, LIKE ONE OF YOUR POOR DEAD SISTERS, GOD REST THEIR SOULS!

YOU CAN IMAGINE...

...THAT I WASN'T ABOUT TO LET THAT LAST PART STAND.

SO, YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU JUST *GAVE UP* THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE--

--A FREAKING *POTENTIAL STAR* AT THAT--

--FOR THE SAKE OF REVENGE? JUST LET HIM GO, *POOF?*

UMMM, *SPOILERS?*

GOTCHA.

ANYWAY, WHO'S TELLING THIS STORY? YOU OR ME?

OKAY, OKAY, GO AHEAD. BUT THIS HAD BETTER GET DRAMATIC.

BLOODY DRAMATIC, TRUTH BE TOLD.

SHE'S PAID UP?

PARENTS PRACTICALLY THREW THE CASH AT ME. SHE MUST BE A HANDFUL.

HERE'S YOUR CUT.

AND FOR YOURSELF? TAKE IT OUT IN TRADE?

BEST PART OF THE JOB.

THEN I WILL LEAVE YOU TO IT. BUT DON'T BE TOO LONG.

I'LL NEED TO BE ON THE ROAD WITH HER WITHIN THE HOUR.

PUNCTUALITY IS CLOSE TO GODLINESS, YOU KNOW.

AND DON'T MAKE *TOO* BIG OF A MESS. CLEANLINESS IS, TOO.

WAIT, YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME HERE WITH HIM!

MY PARENTS SAID YOU WERE TAKING ME TO A CAMP! YOU CAN'T--

DON'T PLAY INNOCENT. YOUR REPUTATION PRECEDES YOU.

I'M NOT SHOWING YOU ANYTHING YOU HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE.

HURRY UP. AND TAKE DOWN YOUR HAIR. I DON'T LIKE IT LIKE THAT.

BUT... THIS...

THIS IS GOD'S HOUSE! YOU CAN'T--

NOTHING HE HASN'T SEEN BEFORE, EITHER.

WHAT'D I TELL YOU? SHAKE OUT THAT HAIR!

BUT... OW!

TURN IT--

SHUT IT!

DON'T...!

RPPPP

DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING...?

WHERE... WHO... ARE...?

YOU'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE. AND *STAY* LOST.

CAN I KICK HIM FIRST? JUST ONCE?

DO I LOOK LIKE YOUR MOTHER? NO?

THEN DO WHAT YOU WANT.

TO BE CONTINUED